

Refugee Employment Alliance

WORLD
ECONOMIC
FORUM

APRIL 2023

PHOTO: REUTERS/ANDREW KELLY

Background

The Refugee Employment Alliance was developed in collaboration with the World Economic Forum's [Community of Chief Human Resources Officers](#), which includes more than 120 CHROs and equivalents from leading multinational companies globally.

The input below was gathered in May 2022 as the war in Ukraine continued to escalate. The insight on what employers were doing to respond to the crisis – and refugee employment and employability more broadly across other conflicts – surfaced common challenges, as well as highlighted the collective desire to scale business support for the economic integration of refugees globally.

"In the wake of the Ukraine crisis, businesses have an incredible opportunity to hire refugees and help them to get back on their feet. I am proud that the Tent Partnership for Refugees is partnering with the World Economic Forum as they kick off their new Refugee Employment and Employability Initiative. Building on our years of experience working with the European business community, Tent and the can further develop companies' refugee hiring programmes across the continent and help accelerate the economic integration of Ukrainians and all refugees as they settle in their new communities."

– Hamdi Ulukaya, Founder, Tent Partnership for Refugees

"Our ambition is to lead with action, and we know that refugees bring a broad set of skills, experience and perspectives that benefit societies and businesses. Helping people find work isn't just a humanitarian effort, it's also good for business."

– Jesper Brodin, Chief Executive Officer, Ingka Group

"Refugee assistance has been one of Agility's top social priorities over the past five years as we have worked alongside UNHCR in Malaysia, Jordan, Lebanon, Uganda and other countries hosting displaced populations. Our experience has shown us the importance of getting basics in place – vital services, status protection, identification documentation, counselling – to lay the groundwork for successful jobs and employment programmes. When they are in place, job-

matching programmes that include mentorships, career counselling, interviews and job placement are more likely to succeed."

– Toby Switzer, Chief Human Capital Officer, Agility

"We recognize that refugees want to become self-supporting and contribute to their new communities, but often face huge challenges in getting a job. Some fled war-torn countries before they completed their education. Others are highly skilled professionals whose qualifications are not recognized in the UK. They have so much to contribute. Employing refugees is not only the right thing to do, but it also makes business sense."

– Kerry Dryburgh, Executive Vice-President, People and Culture, BP

"Prioritizing employment for refugees at Intermountain helps us further our mission of helping people live the healthiest lives possible in two ways. First, it supports these individuals' social determinants of health, as we know employment plays a key factor in the health of a person and the health of their families. Second, we are able to create teams of diverse background and thought, which leads to better patient care, increased employee engagement, and new ways of doing things – enhancing our continuous improvement culture."

– Heather Brace, Senior Vice-President and Chief People Officer, Intermountain Healthcare

"As a health technology company, our focus is to improve the lives of 2.5 billion people a year by 2030, including 400 million people in underserved communities. Supporting refugee employment is closely aligned to this focus. For over 30 years, Philips has actively enabled people distanced from the labour market to integrate into the workplace. Philips has programmes in place that offer refugees training and mentoring support, and we are committed to integrating refugees into our workforce. Working with a multistakeholder community on this issue will provide exponential benefits to refugees, more so than the efforts of any single organization."

– Daniela Seabrook, Chief Human Resources Officer, Philips

“Kearney is committed to do whatever we can to support our colleagues and our communities affected by conflict around the world. With a number of individual and programmatic efforts underway in Europe, including our humanitarian aid platform and redeployment initiatives, our 4,568 Kearney originals continue to look for ways big and small to support those whose lives have been disrupted by the Ukraine crisis.”

– **Stephen Parker, Chief Human Resources Officer, Kearney**

“As the biggest private company in Portugal, Sonae is committed to accelerate the employment of refugees and has created a fast-track process which ensures that Ukrainian people can sign off an employment agreement as soon as possible. In addition, Sonae is working on partnerships for reskilling initiatives, which will enhance refugee employability. At Sonae, we believe the future is human. This is doing the right thing in order to positively impact the life of other human beings and the community as a whole.”

– **Eduardo Mendes, Head, People and Leadership, Sonae**

“Our purpose of making the world more resilient means also responding to the situation in the Ukraine with urgency, concrete actions and deep empathy. In addition to the incredible support from our employees and the Swiss Re Foundation, we are now at a group level helping refugees become more resilient by launching Jobs for refugees. The aim is to spread word of Swiss Re job openings and make it easy for those displaced by the war to find and apply for roles in Europe. We are also asking our employees to spread the word within their own personal and professional networks.”

– **Cathy Desquesses, Chief Human Resources Officer, Swiss Re**

Overview of initiatives from selected partners

Agility’s response to the crisis in Ukraine builds on its experience supporting refugees in Asia and the Middle East. In Jordan, Agility supported [UNHCR’s Job Matching Programme](#), bringing refugees together with potential employers, while in Malaysia the company partnered with UNHCR to support more than 12,000 refugees in navigating administrative requirements, including the renewal of refugee cards. Agility is now working with UNHCR and other NGOs to support refugees and internally displaced people in Ukraine.

BP is dedicated to employing refugees, and – in line with this – has joined the UK government’s [Jobs for Ukraine Pledge](#), which connects signatories to refugees from Ukraine and beyond. To date, 19 people from Ukraine have been hired into BP’s retail business in Poland with a further 15 candidates in the pipeline. BP is now creating and standardizing an approach to recruit and onboard refugees, including a tailored matching process, toolkits for hiring and line managers, and customized outreach and marketing materials. From an employability perspective, the company is focusing on English language tuition, loans to support recertification, and specialist employment advice and placements, collaborating with the [Tent Partnership for Refugees](#) and [RefuAid](#) on these initiatives. BP is actively exploring how to integrate activities into business-as-usual processes.

Ingka Group has been working to create positive change with and for refugees in its neighbourhoods since 2015. In 2019, the company committed to supporting 2,500 refugees by the end of 2023. The goal is to improve peoples’ skills to gain employment inside or outside of the IKEA business. Through their [Skills for Employment initiative](#), the Ingka Group provides 3-6 months of training, and after that refugees and asylum seekers are invited to apply for existing vacancies. To date, the company has supported more than 1,400 refugees in 24 countries in gaining new skills and work experience. With the ever-increasing number of people forcibly displaced globally, the Ingka Group is extending its effort to support those in need to make a new life in secure jobs. The purpose of its new [Hiring Displaced Talent framework](#) is to establish a new pathway to IKEA recruitment that considers the specific and complex needs

of the forcibly displaced candidates. It is built on the idea that those candidates bring their skills from other places and are ready to work.

Intermountain Healthcare aims to support the employment of refugees through focused attention on the pathways to jobs. Leveraging local partnerships, including the Utah Office of Refugee Services (ORS) and Catholic Community Services, Intermountain connects its recruiters to civil society organizations – many of whom deliver industry-specific training – to build appropriate job pipelines. ORS for example, provides community training in phlebotomy which feeds Intermountain’s phlebotomy roles. The company also works with its partners to help refugees access local certifications for foreign credentials. Beyond its longstanding efforts to support the employability of refugees, Intermountain has responded to the crisis in Ukraine with [dedicated fundraising initiatives](#) and other material support, including its supply chain team working to [deliver essential medicines to Poland](#) in support of the humanitarian response.

Kearney is open to all applications from Ukrainian refugees and in several countries simplified the visa/work permit process for Ukrainian refugees. The global consulting firm is also extending its recruiting in Warsaw to attract Ukrainian students. Additionally, Kearney has encouraged humanitarian support through its [logistics and distribution platform](#) that connects suppliers with trusted transport carriers to deliver needed supplies to Ukraine and surrounding countries at speed. Beyond Ukraine, Kearney has partnered with local NGOs in other conflict contexts, including for example, working with [Basma and Zeytouna](#) to support Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Philips committed to hiring 100 refugees in the Netherlands and Germany over the course of five years (2019-2024), and in April 2022, expanded its commitment to hire 150 refugees by 2025. To date, 83 refugees have been hired. In response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, a team across Philips Talent Acquisition was put in place to support recruitment, with a [fast application process](#) implemented for displaced Ukrainians. The first refugees have been hired in the Netherlands and Poland. Beyond a direct focus on

employment, Philips is committed to employability initiatives and in 2021, supported over 260 refugees in Germany, Panama and the UK with career workshops. Philips is now partnering with Tent to expand its mentorship portfolio, with a commitment to mentoring 50 refugee women in the next three years in the UK, Germany and the Netherlands. Philips joined the Tent Partnership for Refugees at the [first Dutch Business summit on refugees](#) in 2019, and has been collaborating since.

Sonae responded to the crisis in Ukraine with a particular focus on supporting refugee employment. The company developed a [bilingual platform](#) where interested candidates can register their interest in applying for a job with the company. Sonae subsequently contacts candidates for exploratory interviews with a view to matching them to appropriate jobs. The company attributes the success of this initiative to its pool of Sonae volunteers who speak Ukrainian and liaise with recruitment teams to guide conversations. Further in its efforts to ensure visibility of vacancies, Sonae advertised its jobs with the Portuguese government, which created a digital platform for refugees in the country. Sonae's response to the crisis in Ukraine builds on its existing work to support refugees, that ranges from recruitment days aimed at supporting refugees with navigating the job application process, to funding child care for nursery-aged children that acknowledge the wider needs associated with enabling refugees to accept employment.

Swiss Re launched #StandwithUkraine, which includes an internal job referral programme that supports those fleeing Ukraine in finding and applying for available roles. Also through this campaign, Swiss Re secured its largest ever donation from employees, and with the Swiss Re Foundation tripling

donations, raised a total of CHF 2.25 million. To support refugees in Slovakia, Swiss Re updated its vacancies to indicate their suitability for Ukrainian refugees and proactively searched for suitable candidates through job portals where Ukrainian refugees had registered their interest in employment. Swiss Re has also contributed to country-specific programmes such as a free mental health helpline in Ukrainian in Slovakia and volunteering activities. One area of focus is employment within the data and technology sectors; the company was a platinum sponsor of an online conference, DevOpsDays #StandWithUkraine, which supported Ukrainian refugees in accessing data and tech job. It also participated in PowerCoders in Switzerland, a coding academy for refugees and migrants that also links into the company's internship programme.

The Adecco Group leveraged its position as an HR and workforce solutions company to create a [jobs portal](#) to simplify job searches for refugees from Ukraine and beyond. Those fleeing Ukraine are invited to submit their interests and experiences on the platform and are then contacted by the Adecco Group for remote interviews to facilitate job matching. The portal also allows candidates to apply directly to vacancies across multiple employers. To date, the portal features 5,000 open vacancies from 1,446 companies and has attracted applications from upwards of 4,657 people fleeing Ukraine. In addition to vacancies, the portal links applicants to advice on CVs, resources on local labour market regulations, resources on relevant training opportunities and more. This builds on the company's work to support displaced people from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan in accessing local labour markets, particularly in the UK, Germany, France, Italy and Greece.